



Texas Infant & Early Childhood
Mental Health Consultation



Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation in Texas

Program Overview

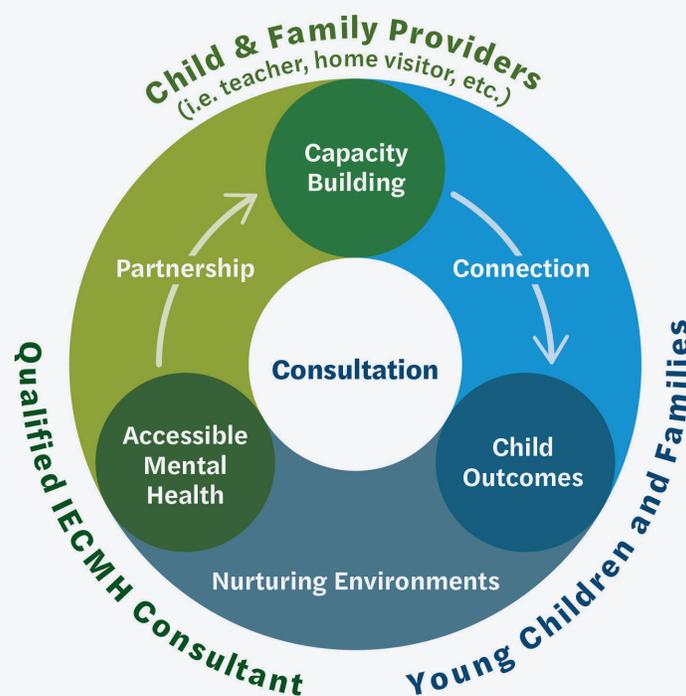
PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENT GRANT | BIRTH TO 5

January 2024

What is IECMHC?

Texas has a multi-faceted children’s mental health system of care. Many states are opting to include infant and early childhood mental health consultation (IECMHC) as a key component of that care continuum to meet the needs of young children and families, especially children birth to 5. This is because IECMHC is an evidence-based mental health promotion and prevention that is designed to bring mental health expertise and supports into the natural settings of early childhood.

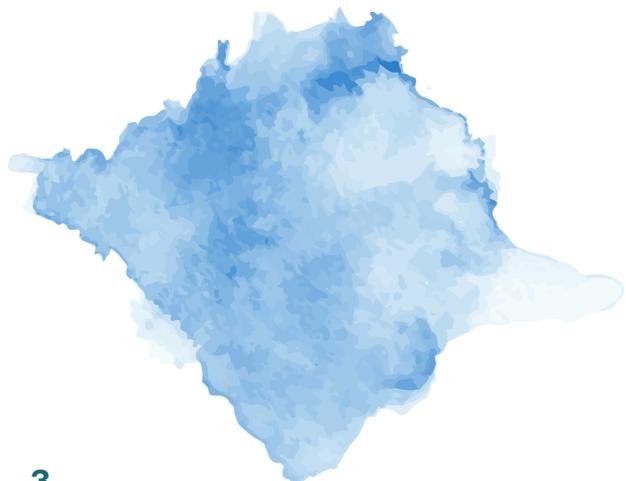
IECMHC promotes the behavioral, social, and emotional well-being of young children through partnering with and supporting their primary caregivers and providers. IECMHC is not therapy. IECMHC is built on the knowledge that the relationship between adult caregiver/provider and child is central in shaping the child’s health and development, and, accordingly, that relationship is a primary focus. IECMH consultants work with child and family providers, young children, and families to understand and address children’s behaviors within the context of development, family relationships and environment, and culture. The positive relationship developed between consultant and provider creates the opportunity for a parallel process for interactions between the provider and parent or provider and child. Then, if appropriate, the team of providers and family members develops a plan for the child, which may entail new strategies, such as in-home visitation, early childhood education settings, or in the home. It may also entail referrals to additional services.



What is the Impact of IECMHC?

IECMHC has been shown to improve children’s social skills and emotional functioning, promote healthy relationships, reduce challenging behaviors, reduce the number of suspensions and expulsions, improve classroom quality, and reduce provider stress, burnout, and turnover. Outcomes associated with this approach include¹:

- » Improved child care center quality;
- » Improved child social-emotional competency;
- » Improved parent-child interactions;
- » Reduction in expulsion and/or suspension risk or rates;
- » Improved school readiness;
- » Reduction in staff turnover;
- » Improved classroom climate;
- » Improved adult knowledge about social-emotional development;
- » Reduction in provider and caregiver stress;
- » Improved adult-child/caregiver-child dyadic relationship; and
- » High provider satisfaction with services.



¹Center of Excellence for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation. (2023, September 13). Searchable Evidence Database for IECMHC. Retrieved from Center of Excellence for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation: <https://www.iecmhc.org/evidence-mapping/>

Data Analysis and Recommendations

To better understand how Texas could establish an IECMHC system, the Texas Workforce Commission contracted with the Texas Institute for Excellence in Mental Health (TIEMH) under the Preschool Development Grant Birth through 5 to investigate best practices in IECMHC and how a state IECMHC could be launched in Texas. TIEMH conducted a landscape analysis of the IECMHC programs developed by other states and in Texas. TIEMH interviewed 14 state IECMHC programs, interviewed 9 Texas IECMHC stakeholders and/or programs, and conducted two surveys of statewide early childhood programs. TIEMH set forth the following recommendations based on data analysis for a Texas system:

I. Model Development Recommendations:

1. Develop a **common definition** for IECMHC in Texas that includes activities, dosage, and settings, and how IECMHC fits into the larger Texas system of children’s mental health care.
2. Create and disseminate a **logic model** for the Texas IECMHC initiative to help articulate the vision and goals of the program and the activities necessary to achieve the desired outcomes.
3. Create a **program manual** that outlines program parameters, such as eligibility, dosage, and activities of consultants. Work with current program providers to build consensus on best practices for Texas and create a program manual to help ensure fidelity and shared understanding. Include family voice in this work.

II. Infrastructure and Leadership Recommendations:

1. **Identify lead organization(s)** to serve as grantor and training and technical assistance (TA) provider, and whether these tasks will be performed by one or two entities. Define roles and responsibilities, identifying who will serve as granting entity, provide contract management and oversight, provide training and technical assistance, support data collection, and oversee model fidelity and continuous quality improvement.
2. The lead organization for training and technical assistance will **staff program personnel who have an advanced degree in mental health** (e.g., counseling, psychology, social work, or psychiatry) to best inform the model development.
3. **Determine the amount of sustainable funding that is needed** to support IECMHC services, including state-level funding for the lead agency, funding for data collection, as well as amount needed to provide via grants to local entities, and amounts for training and technical assistance.

III. Workforce Development Recommendations:

1. Establish a **set of foundational training and qualification criteria for all IECMH consultants**, and a strategy for ensuring that consultants have access to required training.
2. Create a modular **foundational training** that is in alignment with the Center of Excellence for IECMHC and the needs of Texas programs.
3. **Require that IECMH consultants be licensed or license-eligible mental health providers** with an advanced degree in counseling, psychology, social work, or psychiatry.
4. Develop a comprehensive **plan for the recruitment of IECMH consultants** that includes strategies at the state and local levels.

IV. Implementation Pilot Recommendations:

1. **Pilot IECMHC in two to four Texas communities**, depending on the number of consultants per site, to demonstrate model impact.
2. Consider **funding implementation sites through existing early childhood program grants** with Texas state agencies (those for community-based mental health providers) in order to maximize the remainder of time with PDG B-5 funding.
3. Potential implementation sites would **submit proposals** based on community need, requirements, and organizational readiness to support the initiative.
4. Implementation sites would participate in the **recruitment, training, and onboarding** of the IECMH consultants.
5. Implementation sites would participate in **data collection and evaluation activities**, including necessary training regarding tools and data collection, data entry and program monitoring, reporting, and other evaluation activities.

V. Outreach and Engagement Recommendations:

1. Develop outreach materials for a **public awareness campaign** regarding IECMHC that targets early childhood programs and families with input from a wide range of stakeholders in the development of materials, including consultants, families, and state and local agency early childhood leadership.
2. Development and dissemination of an **outreach plan** for messaging materials.



VI. Data Management and Evaluation Recommendations:

1. Early childhood leadership will **identify a lead agency to develop an evaluation plan** that includes both process evaluation and outcome evaluation components.
2. The TA partner and early childhood leadership will **identify a lead state agency to develop outcome measures and other data points** to demonstrate program impact.
3. The TA partner will **select assessment and screening tools** that align with outcome measures recommended by the Center of Excellence for IECMHC.
4. The TA partner and early childhood leadership will establish **data collection protocols**, including a **data management system**, for all data collected for the IECMHC initiative.
5. Early childhood leadership will incorporate IECMHC into the PDG B-5 project **evaluation** to illustrate impact.

Next Steps

If funding allows, Texas will support a short-term implementation pilot of IECMHC using Preschool Development Grant Birth through 5. This pilot would be an opportunity to demonstrate impact and develop a sustainability plan for a statewide IECMHC program. Concurrently, TIEMH will work with Texas early childhood leaders and stakeholders to develop Texas IECMHC program model.

